

(8) An appointment under the fellowship and similar programs authority at 5 CFR 213.3102(r).

§ 537.103 Agency student loan repayment plans.

Before providing student loan repayment benefits under this part, an agency must establish a student loan repayment plan. This plan must include the following elements:

(a) The designation of officials with authority to review and approve offering student loan repayment benefits (which may parallel the approval delegations used for other recruitment, relocation, and retention incentives);

(b) The situations in which the student loan repayment authority may be used;

(c) The criteria to meet or consider in authorizing student loan repayment benefits, including criteria for determining the size and timing of the loan payment(s);

(d) A system for selecting employees (or job candidates) to receive student loan repayment benefits that ensures fair and equitable treatment;

(e) The requirements associated with service agreements (including a basis for determining the length of service to be required if it is greater than the statutory minimum);

(f) The procedures for making loan payments;

(g) The provisions for recovering any amount outstanding from an employee who fails to satisfy a service agreement and conditions for waiving an employee's obligation to reimburse the agency for payments made under this part; and

(h) Documentation and record-keeping requirements sufficient to allow reconstruction of each action to approve a student loan repayment benefit.

§ 537.104 Employee eligibility.

(a) Subject to the conditions in 5 U.S.C. 5379 and this part, an authorized agency official may approve student loan repayment benefits to recruit a highly qualified job candidate or retain a highly qualified employee who, during the service period established under a service agreement (consistent with § 537.107), will be serving under—

(1) An appointment other than a time-limited appointment; or

(2) A time-limited appointment if—

(i) The employee (or job candidate) will have at least 3 years remaining under the appointment after the beginning of the service period established under a service agreement; or

(ii) The time-limited appointment authority leads to conversion to another appointment of sufficient duration so that his or her employment with the agency is projected to last for at least 3 additional years after the beginning of the service period established under a service agreement.

(b) An employee occupying a position that is excepted from the competitive service because of its confidential, policy-determining, policy-making, or policy-advocating character is ineligible for student loan repayment benefits.

(c) An employee becomes ineligible for student loan repayment benefits under the conditions described in § 537.108.

§ 537.105 Criteria for payment.

(a) *General criteria.* Before authorizing student loan repayment benefits for an employee (or job candidate), an agency must make a written determination that—

(1) The employee (or job candidate) is highly qualified and otherwise eligible (as described in § 537.104); and

(2)(i) In a case where the authorization is granted to recruit a job candidate to fill an agency position, the agency otherwise would encounter difficulty in filling a position with a highly qualified individual; or

(ii) In a case where the authorization is granted to retain a current employee of the agency, the employee otherwise is likely to leave the agency for employment outside the Federal service and it is essential to retain the employee based on the employee's high or unique qualifications or a special need of the agency.

(b) *Retention considerations.* In making a determination under paragraph (a)(2)(ii) of this section, an agency must consider the extent to which the employee's departure would affect the agency's ability to carry out an activity or perform a function that is deemed essential to its mission.